

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse
PO Box 3044/ 1400 Tenth St
Sacramento CA 95814

From: County of Tulare – RMA
5961 S Mooney Blvd
Visalia CA 93277

Date: September 7, 2016

Subject: **Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report**

Project Title: Hash Farms Development Project

Project Applicant: Steve Hash Farms

Project Location: The project is located at the northwest corner of Kern Street and Rd 16, in both Tulare and Fresno Counties. The entire 54-acre site is within the Selma USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle and is on Tulare County APNs 028-140-007, 012, 013, 018 and 022, and Fresno County APNs 396-020-008 and 014. The site is within the NE ¼ portion of Section 26, Township 16 South, Range 22 East M.D.B. &M.

Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report of the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. The NOP is available on the County website at:

<http://tularecounty.ca.gov/rma/index.cfm/documents-and-forms/planning-documents/environmental-planning/environmental-impact-reports/>

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.


A scoping meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, September 15, 2016 at 1:30 p.m.** in the Main Conference Room of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency at the address shown above.

Please direct your response to Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner at the address shown above. He may be contacted by e-mail at hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or by telephone at 559-624-7121.

Please provide us with the name of a contact person in your agency.

Signature: 
Hector Guerra
Title: Chief Environmental Planner

Date: 9/6/16

Signature: 
Benjamin Ruiz Jr.
Title: Resource Management Agency Director/Environmental Assessment Officer

Date: 9/6/16

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The proposed Project will be located at the northwest corner of Road 16 and Avenue 396, partially within the City of Kingsburg, Fresno County and Tulare County. The site is approximately one-half mile east of State Route 99 and approximately one-tenth of a mile south of State Route 201. The 54-acre site is located on Tulare County APNs 028-140-007, 012, 013, 018 and 022, and Fresno County APNs 396-020-008 and 014. The site is currently zoned A in Tulare County and R-1-6 in the City of Kingsburg and is within the Selma 7.5 Minute USGS Quadrangle. The proposed Project site lies within a portion of the NE ¼ of Section 26, Township 16S, Range 22E, M.D.B.&E.

The area surrounding the proposed Project site consists largely of rural agricultural land and homesteads, an elementary school and associated recreational park, and residential units within the City of Kingsburg.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.), the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency (RMA) will be preparing an Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate the environmental effects associated with the residential development (Project).

The Applicant is proposing a change of zone from A-1 to R-1/R-2/R-3 to allow a 192-lot residential subdivision. The proposal for the site consists of the phased construction of 185 single family residential units and seven multi-family lots. The phasing breakdown is as follows:

- Phase 1 – 59 lots
- Phase 2 – 35 lots
- Phase 3 – 48 lots
- Phase 4 – 43 lots
- Phase 5 – Seven multi-family lots (up to 28 units)

Also proposed in the development is approximately two acres of open space/parks and two acres of bioswales/ponds. Pacific Gas and Electric will supply electricity, Southern California Gas will provide natural gas, the City of Kingsburg will provide water service and the Selma-Kingsburg-Fowler County Sanitation District will provide sewer service.

To accommodate the proposed development, the following actions will need to occur:

- Annexation of approximately two acres from Fresno County to the City of Kingsburg
- Annexation of approximately 49 acres of land in Tulare County into the Selma-Kingsburg-Fowler County Sanitation District
- Formation of a Community Facilities District and a Tulare County Service Area
- Tulare County approval of a Tentative Map
- Tulare County approval of a Special Use Permit or a Specific Plan
- City of Kingsburg approval of a Master Plan
- City of Kingsburg approval of a Tentative Map
- Detachment from Consolidated Irrigation District

If you require additional information related to this notice, please contact:

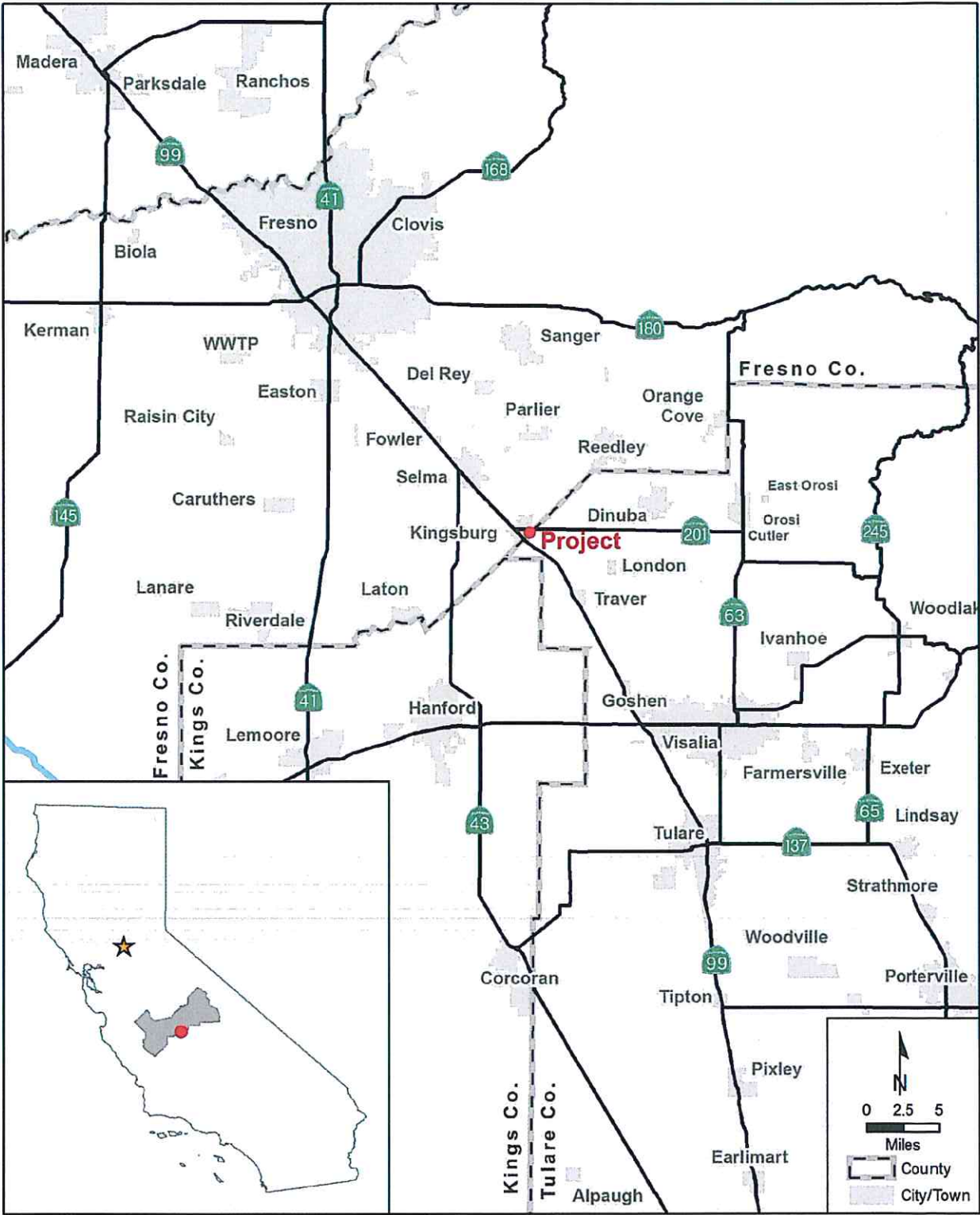
Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
hguerra@co.tulare.ca.us or at (559) 624-7121

Potential Approvals Required:

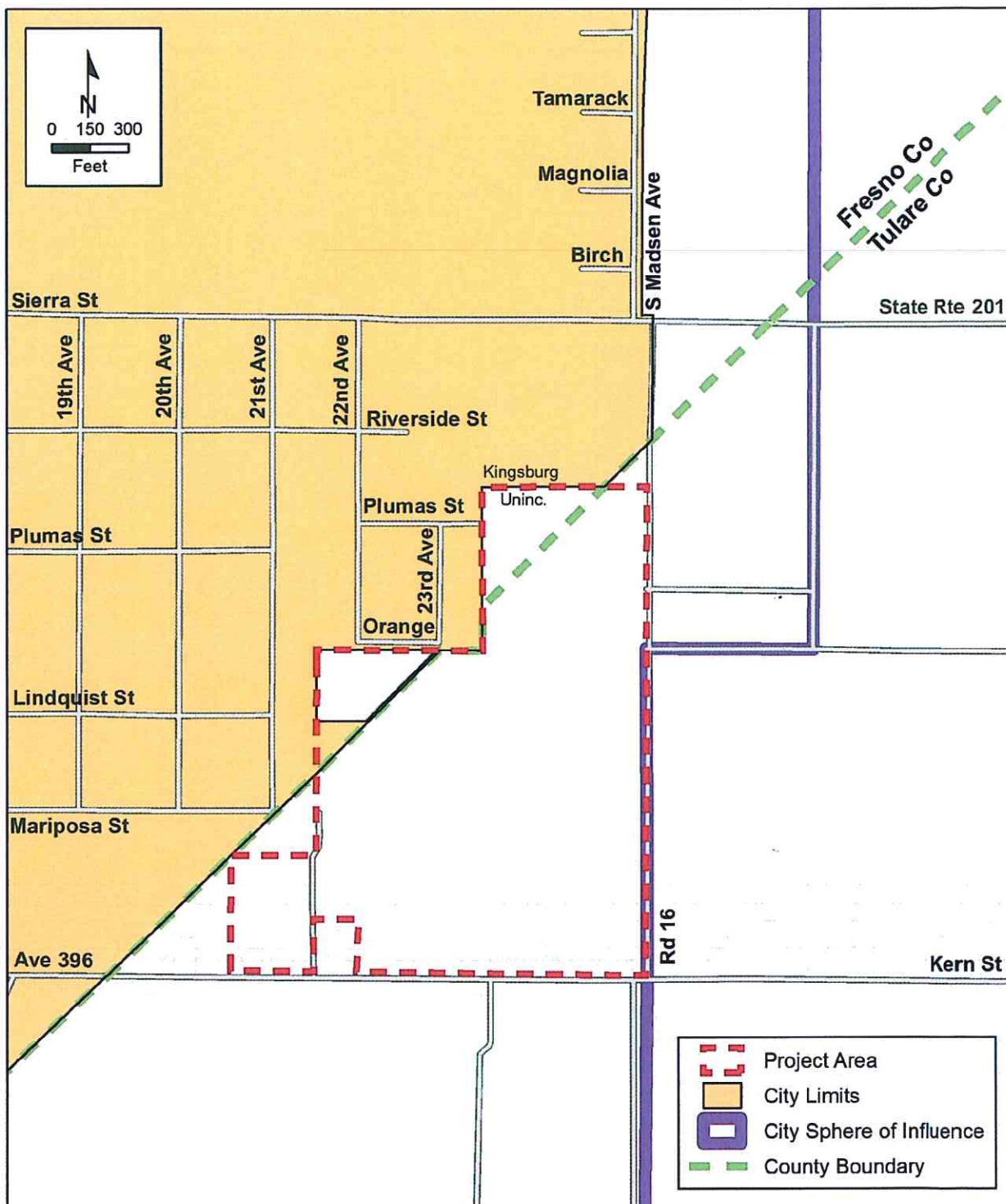
The following agencies may have jurisdiction over elements of the proposed Project:

County of Tulare Resource Management Agencies (Planning Branch, Public Works)
Fresno County Public Works and Planning Department, Development Services Division
City of Kingsburg
Fresno County Local Agency Formation Commission
County of Tulare Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Department of Transportation
Regional Water Quality Control Board
Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission
San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Regional Vicinity Map for Hash Farms Development Project

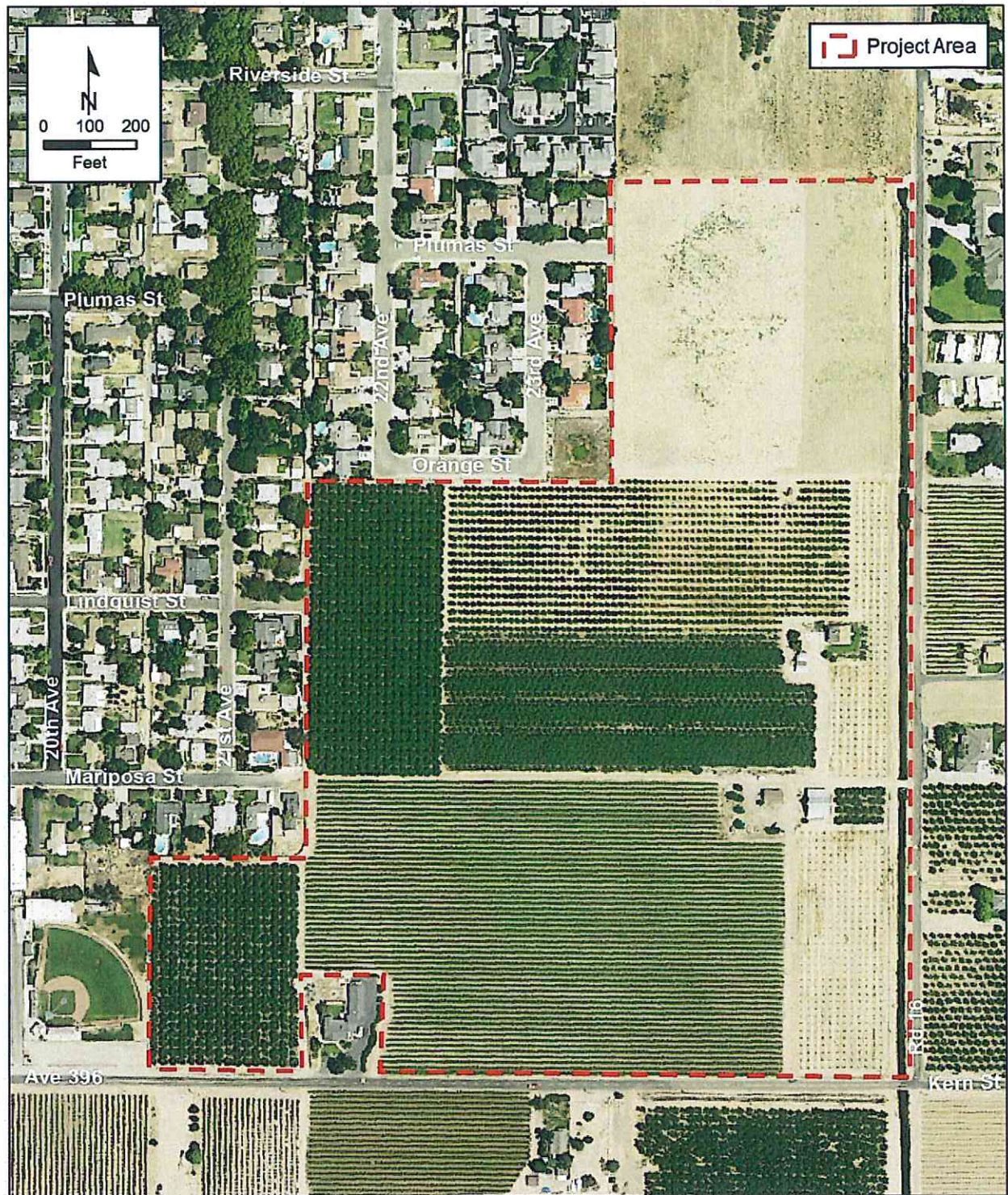


City-County Boundaries for Hash Farms Development Project



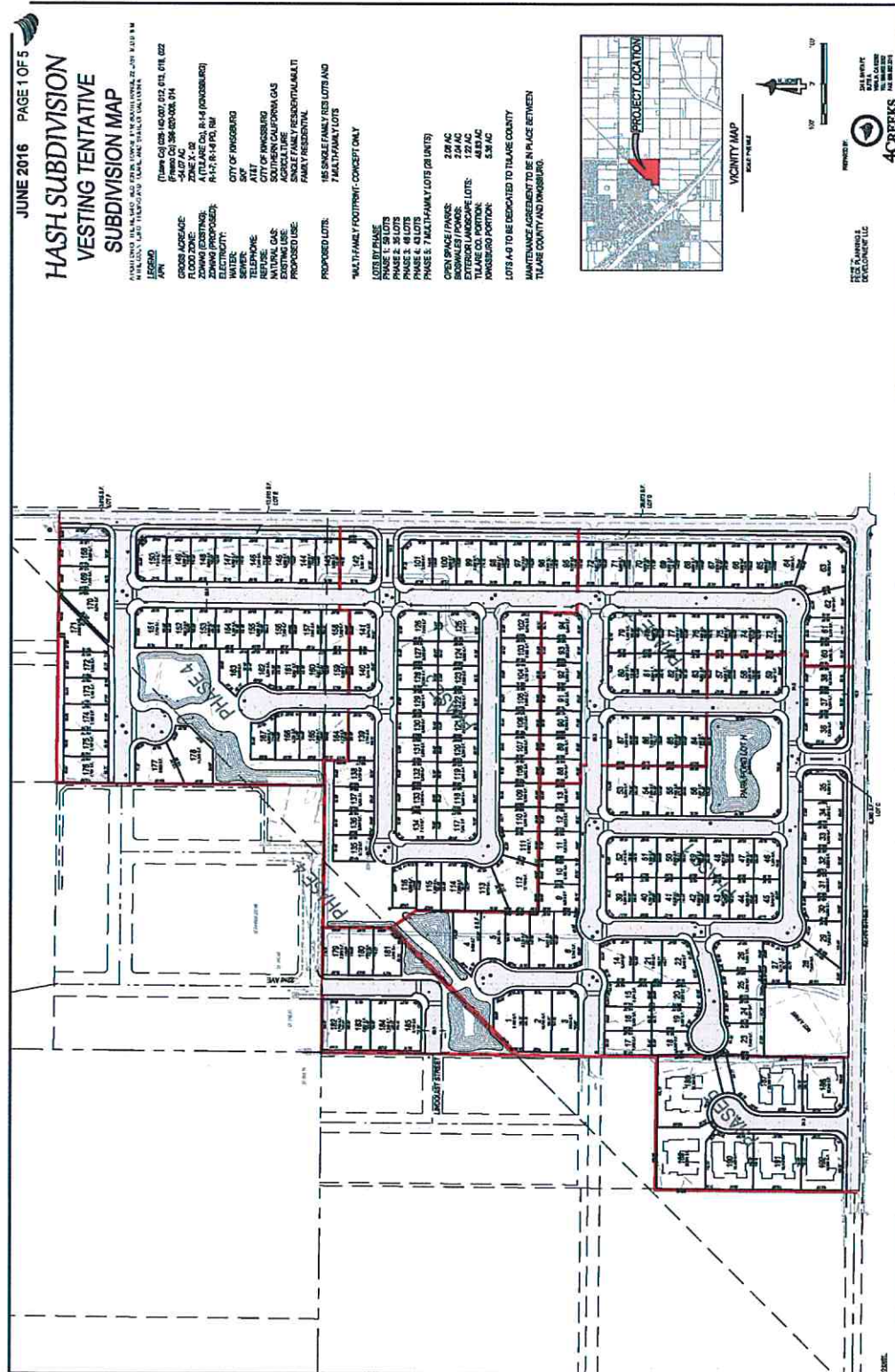
City and County boundary lines are approximate

Site Aerial for Hash Farms Development Project



Imagery: USDA NAIP 2014

Proposed Site Layout for Hash Farms Development



POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will evaluate, among other things, the probable direct and cumulative environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the Hash Farms Development Project. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where feasible, to mitigate potentially significant impacts. The following issues are proposed for analysis in the EIR:

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forestry Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gases	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology/Water Quality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noise
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities / Service Systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance

Aesthetic/ Visual Resources

The County portions of the proposed Project site can be characterized as agricultural land with scattered rural residences. Surrounding agricultural lands consist of stone fruit orchards, row crops and other farmed lands. The Cole Slough canal borders the site to the east. The EIR will provide an assessment of Project impacts to visual resources, as well as lighting and glare impacts. To address such impacts, a detailed landscaping plan will be part of the Draft EIR.

Agriculture Resources

Approximately 49 acres of the proposed Project site are within the City of Kingsburg Sphere of Influence, Tulare County's Kingsburg Urban Development Boundary, and is zoned AE (Exclusive Agriculture) by Tulare County. Approximately two acres is within Fresno County and will be annexed into the City of Kingsburg. The remaining approximate three acres is within the City of Kingsburg and is zoned R-1-6.

The proposed Project site is mapped as containing 2.5 acres of Farmland of Local Importance, 0.5 acres of Prime Farmland, 46 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and the remaining three acres is urban and built-up land by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program; however, it is not enrolled in a Williamson Act Contract. The site is actively farmed with stone fruit and grapes. The site is adjacent to urban and built up land to the north and west and actively farmed Farmland of Statewide Importance to the east and south.

The EIR will provide an assessment of potential Project impacts to agricultural resources, including a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment developed by the California Department of Conservation, to determine any potential impacts resulting from agricultural land conversion.

Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The EIR will describe regional and local air quality in the vicinity of the proposed Project site and evaluate impacts to air quality associated with Project construction and operation. An air quality study will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts. The proposed Project's estimated air emissions will be compared to emissions thresholds of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD). The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions within the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin and will evaluate the proposed Project's potential air quality impacts. Potential air quality emissions impacts include odor, dust, pathogens, and construction related activities. The EIR will also include a discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and the proposed Project's contribution to potential cumulative impacts on global climate.

Biological Resources

The proposed Project site has been and remains actively disturbed as a result from intense agricultural activity. The proposed Project site is surrounded on two sides by agricultural land which may provide foraging ground for sensitive animal species. A biological reconnaissance of the proposed Project site will be conducted and the proposed Project's potential to affect biological resources will be analyzed in the EIR.

Cultural Resources

There are no visibly identifiable or recognizable cultural resources within the proposed Project site. Although the proposed Project will be constructed on previously disturbed, agriculturally productive areas, it cannot be definitively concluded that cultural resources are absent. As such, a search of the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center California Historical Resources Information System will be conducted. The Native American Heritage Commission will be consulted to identify potential areas of traditional cultural significance. As such, the proposed Project's potential to affect cultural resources will be analyzed in the EIR.

Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources,

Initial construction, buildout, and operation of the proposed Project on the project site could result in impacts related to geotechnical hazards, including seismicity of the area, potential for liquefaction and subsidence, potential for soil erosion, soil stability characteristics, and shrink/swell potential of site soils, as applicable. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Resource Reports for Western Tulare County and Eastern Fresno Area, the site contains Calgro-Calgro, Tujunga loamy sand, Hanford sandy loam and Hesperia fine sandy loam, which are well drained soils. According to the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update EIR, there are no known potential mineral resources. It is currently unknown

whether the proposed Project site soils have the potential to contain paleontological resources. If such resources exist on the site, construction, expansion, and continued operational activities could result in potentially significant impacts. The EIR for the proposed Project will evaluate potential site-specific impacts related to geology, soils, mineral resources, and paleontological resources.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

There are no known hazards or hazardous materials located within the proposed Project site, nor is the proposed Project site located on a Cortese List site. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the proposed Project to result in, or be affected by, impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials.

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Water Supply

The Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update DEIR, Figure 3.6-5 indicates that the proposed Project area is outside of the 100-Year and 500-Year Flood Zones and but is located within the Dam Failure Inundation Area of Pineflat Dam. The proposed Project is within the Kings River Watershed and over the Kings River groundwater basin. Water for the proposed Project will be supplied through the City of Kingsburg, which has an existing main line located at the southwest corner of the site. The EIR will describe the proposed Project's effect, both directly and cumulatively on the hydrology, water quality, and water supply resources. A water supply/quality study will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts.

Land Use and Planning

The EIR will describe the proposed Project's potential effects on existing and planned land uses. The proposed Project lies within the jurisdiction of the County of Tulare, the County of Fresno and the City of Kingsburg. Approximately 49 acres of the proposed Project site lie within Tulare County and according to Tulare County's General Plan, the subject property is currently designated "Agriculture", within the County's City of Kingsburg Urban Area Boundary and within the City of Kingsburg's Sphere of Influence. Approximately two acres is within Fresno County and will be annexed into the City of Kingsburg as a part of the Project. The approximate three-acre portion of the proposed Project site within the City of Kingsburg is zoned R-1-6 and is an allowable use within that Zone District. As a part of the proposed Project, the Agriculture Zone designation in Tulare County would be changed from A to R-1 (single family residential zone) and R-2/R-3 (multiple-family zone).

The EIR will provide a discussion of relevant local plans and policies because conflicts could potentially result in environmental impacts.

Noise

The EIR will describe the noise levels associated with proposed Project construction and operation and will compare these levels to applicable noise thresholds to determine whether the proposed Project would result in a significant noise impact.

Population and Housing

The EIR will evaluate the Project's effect on population and housing in the local area based on estimations of Project employment and distribution of the employees by place of residence.

Public Services and Recreation

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential to create an adverse impact to schools, and will also evaluate effects on local police and fire services along with parks and regional recreational facilities.

Transportation/Traffic

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's impact on regional and local transportation facilities based on a transportation analysis that will assess both construction-related impacts (heavy truck trips and construction worker trips), as well as operational impacts (residential trips). The proposed Project will have two points of entrance and exit on Road 16, and one point of entrance and exit on Kern Street, Plumas Street, Lindquist Street, and Mariposa Street. Road 16 is a County-designated Major Collector street and the Tulare County General Plan 2030 Update DEIR considers LOS D as the minimum acceptable LOS standard during peak hours for major roadways and intersections. A traffic study will be prepared to establish baseline, project, and cumulative impacts for the proposed Project in consultation with the City of Kingsburg, County of Tulare, the Tulare County Association of Governments, and CalTrans. Similarly, the Draft EIR will examine alternative traffic distribution.

Utilities

The proposed Project site is currently a mixture of orchards, vineyards and fallow land. To accommodate the residential units associated with the proposed Project, electricity would be provided by Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company would provide gas, and the City of Kingsburg would provide water. Wastewater services would be provided by the Selma-Kingsburg-Fowler County Sanitation District and maintenance of the shared greenspace would be accommodated through a maintenance agreement between the City of Kingsburg and Tulare County. The EIR will analyze the current capacity of the above-mentioned services and the proposed Project's impact on these systems and the capacity available to support the proposed Project. The EIR will also describe the solid waste facilities that would serve the proposed site.

The applicant would be required to construct infrastructure to urban development standards set forth by both Tulare County and the City of Kingsburg, including the construction of appropriate road improvements to Road 16 and Avenue 396 to the extent that an appropriate nexus to the proposed Project is determined. The EIR prepared for the Project will analyze the adequacy of infrastructure services for the Project including road, water and wastewater services, and if appropriate, may require mitigation measures.

Growth Inducement

The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project's potential for growth inducement resulting from expansion or extension of infrastructure improvements, as well as new demand for housing, and goods and services. The effect of primary and secondary increases in employment and economic activity will be discussed.

Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will discuss the incremental contribution of the proposed Project to cumulative effects of other past, current, and planned and reasonably foreseeable Projects in the vicinity. The summary of projects method will be used where applicable. Also, to the extent feasible, the Cumulative Impacts section will quantify the degree of severity of any cumulative impact.

ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED IN THE EIR

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the proposed Project's objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed Project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the Lead Agency as infeasible and briefly explain the reasons why. The EIR will also provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested individuals, groups, and agencies may provide to the County of Tulare Resource Management Agency, Planning Branch, written comments on topics to be addressed in the EIR for the proposed Project. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than **5:00 p.m. October 3, 2016**. Agencies that will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed Project should provide the name of a staff contact person. Please send all comments to:

Hector Guerra, Chief Environmental Planner
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
Planning Branch
5961 South Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93277-9394
or via e-mail at: HGuerra@co.tulare.ca.us
or via facsimile: 559-730-2653
or via phone: 559-624-7121